

National Action Plan to Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections: Roadmap to Elimination

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

I. Coordination of Efforts

Since the start of the Department-wide, healthcare-associated infection (HAI) initiative in 2008 and publication of the initial *HHS Action Plan to Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections* in 2009, substantial progress has been made in reducing HAIs. As a component of the Partnership for Patients, the HAI initiative is now focused on the accelerated reduction of HAIs through a new national collaborative effort calling upon private and public sector participants and engaging consumers as full partners in achieving this goal and across Departments of the federal government.

The success of HAI prevention effort will require effective coordination across the federal government and between the Departments and key stakeholders nationwide. A synchronized effort must involve consistent communication among all the organizations involved in the initiative. This enhanced communication will allow for problems to be approached in a holistic fashion rather than as disparate parts. Activities and initiatives in existence or those in development within one agency can be identified, targeted, and leveraged to aid acceleration of progress towards common goals.

Success will require that all parties take a measure of responsibility for ensuring that every patient is protected. The goal of elimination can be accomplished only if several elements of the effort are in place: a network of highly engaged participants working together and steadily advancing innovation through research; timely, credible, reliable, and validated surveillance and monitoring of data; access to the latest information in state-of-the-art best practices; support of leaders and executives in hospitals, healthcare organizations, professional societies, and government; partnerships between healthcare providers and state and local public health officials; and full engagement of healthcare consumers.

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) can and will serve to coordinate, facilitate, and support this national network of committed partners. Ultimately, consumers will require access to information that allows them to make fully informed choices regarding their healthcare and to represent themselves and their families in the healthcare delivery process. Professionals must be able to work in a culture of safety within an environment that permits any member of the healthcare team to act in every case and at all times in the best interest of the patient without fear of adverse consequence. Leaders and executives must support an environment of complete transparency in quality care without undue concern for risk to their institution in a highly competitive marketplace.

Given the extraordinary complexity of modern healthcare, the fact that the elimination of HAIs has become a foreseeable goal is a powerful testament to the dedication and

commitment of healthcare personnel to the well-being of their patients. HHS will continue the activities that have contributed to patient safety advances to this time:

- 1) The HHS Steering Committee for the Prevention of Healthcare-Associated Infections will continue to support collaboration and integration of Departmental efforts to support the elimination goal.
- 2) The Office of Healthcare Quality (OHQ) within the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health will continue to facilitate communication, networking, and information sharing through proactive outreach to governmental and non-governmental partners. To this end, OHQ will sponsor a series of regional meetings in 2011 or 2012 to support local, state, and regional efforts across the United States.
- 3) The Steering Committee, through OHQ, will sponsor a “Data Summit” to continue the process of coordination of public reporting and sharing of validated HAI data to state and local health agencies, as well as ensuring its availability to consumers. Topics to be discussed include standardization of HAI data definitions, reducing the data collection burden of surveillance systems, how to enhance reporting to surveillance systems, and many others.
- 4) The Steering Committee will continue to monitor national progress toward achievement of the specific goals set in the original and any successor *Action Plans*.
- 5) The Steering Committee will continue to support innovative research projects and demonstration programs in collaboration with Operating and Staff Divisions across HHS, as well as stakeholders.
- 6) The Steering Committee will continue to evaluate programmatic efforts in order to constantly improve the Department’s approach to HAI elimination and potentially accelerate progress towards elimination.

II. Conclusion

The Department has a long and proud history in steadily and substantially improving the health and welfare of Americans. Despite this progress, at any given time, about one in every 20 inpatients has an infection related to their hospital care, and HAIs continue to take a significant toll on human life. The good news is that in the United States we can now define these infections as “unacceptable” and can foresee their elimination.

The lives saved, the disability and suffering prevented, and the excess costs of care saved make the Partnership for Patients a top HHS priority. As a component in that Partnership, we believe that the success achieved to date in reducing the burden of HAIs has been only the first part of a national movement that will transform patient safety and healthcare quality. We are confident that the end result will be a safer and healthier America.